

small print would greatly have helped the reader to get the material into order in his mind, and to trace more clearly the line of thought which underlies the whole.

As it is, the book is valuable chiefly when used as a volume of reference read in conjunction with some other work which would give an extended treatment of the subject. And even so, it would be necessary to allow for the views of the writer himself; a reader of Oesterley's first section of the *Hebrew Religion* issued jointly by himself and the present reviewer, would not always find the passages he wanted, and would note others which did not appear to illustrate the points which needed illustration. The book is, nevertheless, an interesting experiment, and writers of larger works may find it of value for purposes of reference.

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T. H. ROBINSON.

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THE AGRICULTURAL LIFE OF THE JEWS IN BABYLONIA  
BETWEEN THE YEARS 200 C.E. AND 500 C.E. By Rabbi  
J. NEWMAN. 7½ × 5, pp. xii + 216, map 1. London :  
Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1932. 8s.

As Dr. Newman explains in his preface, he uses the term "agricultural life" in a wide sense, and includes many aspects of the life of the Jews in Babylonia which do not come strictly under the head of agriculture. He gives his readers, in fact, a fairly comprehensive picture of the conditions under which the community lived in southern Mesopotamia, including the very important matters of taxation and civil law. The interest of the subject lies in the fact that, probably, there was no other part of the ancient world—at any rate after the failure of Bar Cochba—where the Jew enjoyed so much freedom to live his own life without interference from the Gentile. Persian law was, of course, enforced but, until the rise of the Sassanide dynasty, there was no official persecution, and even after that point there were long periods during which the Jews remained unmolested.

Dr. Newman's study of the subject is based entirely on the evidence offered by the Talmud, and every point he makes is supported by direct reference to that source. Occasionally, perhaps, he assumes a knowledge of post-Biblical Jewish literature which only a small proportion of his readers can claim but, for the most part, his views and statements are intelligible even to the lay mind. We get a picture of a quiet and industrious folk, often forming a majority of the population in the districts where they lived, and carrying on their concerns with as little reference as possible to their heathen neighbours. In detail, we find discussed such matters as the ownership and tenure of land, the status of the actual workers, the crops grown and the methods by which they were produced, the animals and birds reared by the Jews in Babylonia, the important operations of milling, baking, and butchering, taxation, and civil law. In all these matters attention is carefully drawn to the peculiar conditions of the community in Mesopotamia, while little or no mention is made of aspects of life in which Jewish communities were alike all the world over. The great Academies, for instance, are mentioned, but there is hardly a reference to the worship of the Jews, which must have been central in their life, there as elsewhere. It should be added that the book contains an interesting illustrative map.

The present book is an expansion of a thesis submitted to the University of London, and it has the advantages and disadvantages of its original purpose. That is to say, it is neither a disquisition on the subject nor a popular account, but rather a careful accumulation of the materials on which either might be based. Few men can do their best work with an examiner in the background, and we may reasonably hope that in years to come Dr. Newman may give us a more critical account of a subject in which he seems to be a pioneer. Even if he himself does not do so, he has at least pointed the way, and has collected a good deal of valuable matter.

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T. H. ROBINSON.